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WORKS OF RAMAPRASAD CHANDA

[1873-1942]

ARCHAEOLOGIST, HISTORIAN, ANTHROPOLOGIST ETC.

WITH

EXCERPTS FROM HIS WRITINGS & APPRECIATIONS BY OTHERS

(*In English and Bengali*)

4394

Dedicated to the sacred memory of
Kusum Kumari Chanda, wife of Ramaprasad Chanda,
Who in her short span of life
was the source of inspiration of the great Savant.

State Museum Library * Lucknow *

Compiled by—

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JULY, 1973

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Gleanings from Ramprasad's **first** published writing—'Some forgotten chapters of early Indian history', in *The Dawn* of Calcutta, August, **1900**.

"The internal history of the Ghazni empire is made up of a constant succession of dynastic revolutions and military revolts The Punjab remained loyal and faithful throughout. * * From the early down of the recorded history, the Punjab had oftened passed under the foreign yoke. But invariably, the foreigners were driven out by the founders of the great Hindu empires in the Northern India. * * But during the eleventh and the twelth centuries, no such empire - builder was nurtured among the reigning Hindu dynasties of Northern India. Sultan Mahmud had destroyed the Pala [Shahi] empire and with the death of Bhimpal the imperial traditions of Hindustan died out. In those days, Hindustan outside the Punjab was divided into a considerable number of principalities, of more or less extent and importance, and ruled by a variety of dynastic races which entertained the most changing relations to one another, sometimes of peace, sometimes of war, and generally of varying inter-dependence. Years rolled on and yet none of these dynastic races succeeded in imposing imperial sway on the others, or in solving the inter - dynastic problem in such a way as to be able to command sufficient resources to deliver the Punjab." (p. 360)

[There is an unconscious uniformity in his thought process so strikingly manifested in this **first** published writing and in his **last** extracted in pp. 4 & 5, the significance of which may not be overlooked—**Compiler**]

Published by Shri Nabaniprasad Chanda and other members of the family of late Ramaprasad Chanda.
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WORKS OF RAMAPRASAD CHANDA

With

Excerpts from his Writings and Appreciations by Others

(born August 15, 1873—died May 28, 1942)

Life :

Ramaprasad was a well known historian and anthropologist of his time. His studies and researches extended also to other subjects such as - archaeology, Indian art, biographical essays, sociology and the like.

Sometime after graduation, he commenced his career as a school teacher and continued as such till 1917. From the works of great Bankim Chandra, he derived his inspiration for the study of history, origin of races and other cultural subjects. His contributions to learned journals embodying the results of his researches started with 'The Dawn' of Calcutta and were continued in the 'East and West' of Bombay in the first decade of the present century. The papers he read at the sessions of the Bengali Literary Conference in 1909 and in 1910, and his researches undertaken and published under the auspices of the Varendra Research Society, of which he was one of the founders, established his position as a front rank scholar. In this period were published 'Gaurarajamala', the history of ancient Bengal written purely on basis of epigraphic evidence and 'The Indo-Aryan Races', based on his field works and regarded as a monumental contribution in the field of Indian Anthropology.

Ramaprasad then spent about 2 years as a scholar in the Archaeological Survey of India when, besides exploring and excavating new sites, he started the Memoir series of the Department. Later in 1919, at his suggestion, Sir Ashutosh established a Dept. of Anthropology in the University of Calcutta and Ramaprasad was appointed as its head. In 1921, he was appointed the Superintendant of the Archaeological Section of the Indian Museum in Calcutta when he re-arranged the sculptures of the museum. He also re-arranged the exhibits at Sarnath and Mathura museums. He carried out extensive archaeological explorations in the then Mayurbhanj State and started the museum at Khiching to house the important antiquities he collected.

After he retired from service in 1932, he continued to take active interests in historical and sociological studies and guided students in their researches. Ramaprasad addressed a number of learned gatherings in this period, such as—Indian Science Congress, First International Congress of Anthropology at London, the Royal Society of Arts, London, Gauriya Math (on Sree Chaitanya's birthplace) and diverse cultural conferences. A major subject of his studies for some years then was the life of Raja Rammohun Roy.

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From Writings on the Works of Ramaprasad Chanda

1. Introduction to *'The Indo-Aryan Races'* (Reprint) by Dr N. N. Bhattacharyya of the Centre of Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History & Culture, University of Calcutta, July 1969.

'Ramaprasad Chanda was one of the few historians of India who had his own point of view and who really suggested something new and bold from sources that had never been broached before. It is sometimes felt that India has virtually no historical records worth the name and that without some previous knowledge of the actual structure of the Indian society any attempt to construct history from the literary documents alone is bound to be futile. That the knowledge of the actual structure of the Indian Society is possible only through archaeology and anthropology was understood by Chanda as early as the first decade of the present century. Since Indian archaeology in his time was not advanced enough to solve the really important questions, he depended especially on anthropological data available in plenty in India. This does not mean that he was indifferent to literary sources. In this age of sub-specialisation it should be remembered that Chanda was one of the very few scholars who had a mastery of Sanskrit language and literature, epigraphy and paleography, art, architecture and sculpture, linguistics, anthropology and other branches of knowledge which he thought relevant for his purpose. To him history never appeared to be a dull record of events culled from literary or epigraphic sources and arranged in chapters,—an approach that makes the stream of historiography stagnant and muddy. As in science so in history, some amount of creative imagination is required in order to frame hypotheses leading to further investigations. Chanda was unusual as a historian because of this very 'modernism' of his outlook. It matters little whether his hypotheses remain valid today, but the fact remains that his attitude towards historical researches, i.e., the collation of written records with archaeology and the interpretation of each of these in terms of ethnographical findings, is basically accepted at least by one important section of historians today. (p. iii)

'Chanda's chapters on Vaishnavism and Saktism in the *Indo-Aryan Races* are of classic status, and their importance has not yet been slightly diminished. He vigorously asserted that the cult of Gopala or child Krishna had nothing to do with any Christian influence.' (p. vii)

2. 'Indian Physical Anthropology and Raciology — Ramaprasad Chanda's Contribution', an article published in *'Science and Culture'* vol. VIII (1942-43), in 3 issues, by 'A. K. M.' *

* Author—A. K. M, i.e., late Dr. Achyut Kumar Mitra worked very close to Chanda in his last years and Mitra's devotion to his *Guru* found expressions in this treatise written soon after Chanda's death. Mitra passed away, while a Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Study at Simla, suddenly in 1970.

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'In a very definite sense, he may be said to be father of Indian Physical Anthropology. * * * by his interpretation of the data collected by himself and by Risley, Chanda liberated the young science of physical anthropology from the leading strings of officialdom and set it up as an Indian science which may be persued by the people of India for their own good, and for unravelling the threads of their own racial history and culture ' (p. 201)

'The preceding account of Chanda's contribution to Indian Anthropology will have made it sufficiently clear that his interest in this young science arose mainly from his historieal studies To him history was pre-eminently a study of civilisation,—civilisation as created by different races of man, by their respective social and mental habits, thoughts and superstitions. This habit of considering man as a whole, led Chanda to glean and make use of data from various fields, e. g , sociology, religion, funeral customs, language and material culture. For a just estimation of his work, therefore, it is necessary to review it from the standpoint of various disciplines.' (p. 251)

3. '*Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilisation*' edited by Sir John Marshall (1931), vol. I

'Like Saivism itself *yoga* had its origin among the pre-Aryan population, and this explains why it was not until the epic period that it came to play an important role in Indo-Aryan religion. Even before the discovery of this seal (MIC. xii, 17) Rai Bahadur R. P. Chanda had pointed out that the head of the male statue from Mohenjodaro illustrated in pl. xcviii has its eye coneentrated on the tip of the nose, and had concluded—with remarkable intuition – that it was portrayed in an attitude of *Yoga*.' (p. 54)

4. '*The Indo-Aryan Races* by Ramaprasad Chanda', by Prof. A. B. Keith in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1917, pp.167-175.

'This * * * forms a valuable addition to the literature dealing with the origin of the Indo-Aryan peoples * * * * his opinions gain greatly both in value and clearness from their ordered exposition, and whatever conclusions be arrived at as regards his main theses, all interested in the question must recognise the catholic character of his erudition, and the ingenuity and effectiveness of his arguments, which render his work a serious contribution to the subject with which it deals.' (p. 167)

5. 'Nadia in Old Maps— Sri Chaitanya's Birthplace', by Tridandiswami Srimad Bhakti Vilas Tirtha, President-Acharya, Sri Chaitanya Math, Sri Mayapur, in *Hindusthan Standard* of Feb. 26, 1961.

'Rai Bahadur Rama Prasad Chanda, after making a thorough research, wrote (11th May, 1934) that some amount of controversy had been set on foot for sometime regarding the exact birth-place of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and for the matter of that the location of Navadwip, the Oxford of India, during the time of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He approached the whole matter most scientifically and traced all available records left by Sir William Hunter, Major James Rennell (1764), Major F.C. Hirst, Sir Richard Temple, William Hedge (1684), Kavi Karnapur (1572) and Sri Brindabandas Thakur, etc. From the

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survey records and geographical descriptions left by them it has been proved without the least doubt that Navadwip has always been lying in the east of the Bhagirathi. Though the course of the river has changed in many parts of this land, the existing position of the old villages * * * * reveal the fact that the river Bhagirathi has been flowing by the western side of Nabadwip ' (col. 2)

From Ramaprasad Chanda's Writings

1. *'Medieval Indian Sculpture in the British Museum'*, London, 1936

'Dancing Siva * * * evidently from a temple of Siva at Bhubaneswar. * * * * * It has been rightly said that the great works of art do not yield their secrets all at once: To a careful observer this image of the dancing god of gods will convey an exhilarating sense of rhythmic motion impregnated by a sense of peace and permanency. The last element is contributed by the expression of complacent meditation that illumines the face of Siva. This point suggests the symbolic meaning of the dance of Siva which is thus explained in the *Kurma Purana* (part ii, 4. 33) wherein Siva himself is made to say, 'I am that god who sets everything in motion and who, absorbed in *yoga* and enjoying highest bliss, is always dancing. He who knows that knows *yoga*' The dance of Siva means, on the one hand, dance accompanying the enjoyment of the bliss of *yoga*, and, on the other, his creative cosmic activities.

'In Dravidian images of dancing Siva where he is looking outward with wide open eyes the cosmic aspect of the dance is emphasized. But in the Indo-Aryan images an attempt is made to give form to the other aspect, the dance of the god as Yogi or the liberated soul, as well.' (pp. 73 & 74)

2. 'The Indian Union, the Mughal empire and the Maratha State', in *The Modern Review*, July, 1942, vol. 72, (pp. 52-56)

' * * * * Why did they [Marathas], while imposing on the Mughal emperor the *de facto* position of a tributory, themselves accepted the *de jure* position of subjects ? The simple answer to this question is, the Marathas did so out of regard for the high prestige of the occupant of the Mughal imperial throne. * * * * the existence of a number of absolutely independent states in India has ever been a source of internal wars, and weakened India's power of resistance to foreign invaders. The geography of India teaches the political lesson that the only means of securing internal peace and safety from aggression by external enemies in a country like India is the establishment of an empire or political union embracing the whole country. In the historical period the Maurya emperor Asoke was probably the first to organise such an union. * * * * It was this faith in the Mughal empire, not as an ordinary empire based on force, but as an empire of free states that induced the Marathas, while imposing humiliating terms on the emperor, to humiliate themselves by accepting the position

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of vassals of an empire in the moment of their triumph. The East India Company followed the same course in their own way in the second half of the eighteenth century. Consciously these powers did so out of regard for the house of Timur, but unconsciously they followed the direction of geography and the history of India.' (p. 56). [This is the last article from the pen of the late Rai Bahadur Ramaprasad Chanda, written specially for the *Modern Review*, just before his untimely demise—Ed., M. R.]

3. 'The Scope and Methods of Anthropology', an Introductory lecture delivered on Nov. 3, 1919, with Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee presiding and published in the *Modern Review*, Aug. 1920, pp. 137-142.

'For raising a good crop three different elements are necessary-good seed, good soil and nurture. Soil and nurture give the seed opportunities to grow but they cannot cause variations, that is to say, cannot improve the seed itself. Our racial heritage is seed. Anthropology by revealing to us the laws of inheritance that have governed the origin and development of varities may show the path of amelioration of our people and of releving it of the burden of congenital defects. This is the greatest service that anthropology is likely to render to humanity.' (p. 142)

4 'Sind five thousand years ago', in *The Modern Review*, Aug. 1932, pp. 151-160.

'Pushing back the beginnings of philosophical religions like Saivism and Jainism to the Chalcolithic period must appear a bold hypothesis to some. But unless one is ready to make the bolder assumption of an impassable gap between the historic and the prehistoric Indus valley, the inference that the close resemblence of the postures of the sitting and the standing deities on the Indus seals indicates the prevalence of the practice of *yoga* in that remote age has to be accepted as a working hypothesis. It is not possible to practice, *yoga* or concentration of the mind on things spiritual without arriving at metaphysical concepts.' (pp. 159 & 160)

'To the present writer the exploration of one area appears to be urgent. Chalcolithic remains have been found at Ruper in the Ambala district in the Punjab. It was on the banks of the Sarasvati and the Drishadvati that in the Rigvedic age the rival Rishi clans, the Vasishthas and the Visvamitras, lived, and the powerful Kshatriya clan, the Bharata-Tritsus, held sway. Remains marking the transition from the prehistoric to the Rigvedic civilization may be expected on the dry bed of the Sarasvati and the Ghagger in the Ambala district.' (p. 160)

5. 'Sramanism,' Presidential address, Anthropological Sect of the 21st Indian Science Congress, Bombay, 1934 ; pp. 383-410 of the proceedings.

'I shall now conclude this lengthy address with a few remarks on the good and evil consequences of Sramanism. The gretest contribution that Sramanism has made to the

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culture of India is the Indian Philosophy. According to the Hindus, knowledge is to be acquired not only by thinking but by practising asceticism and meditation. Indian art also owes its inspiration to a considerable extent to Sramanism. But while aiding the building up of the civilization, Sramanism generated toxins in the social organisation that undermined its health. In a stanza from a Purana quoted above from Apastamba's Dharmasutra, it is said that these eighty-eight thousand Risis (sages) who desired no offspring obtained immortality. The Risis who desired no offspring and could renounce the world for the pursuit of knowledge were undoubtedly ahead of their community both morally and intellectually. But their dying without issue for hundreds of generations resulted in the gradual elimination of the best elements of the population and thereby contributed to the decline of the Hindus' (p. 410)

6. 'Harappa', in *Science and Culture* January, 1941, pp. 377-381.

'* * * These diverse methods of disposal of the calcined bones could not all have originated among the Vedic Aryans whose poets composed the hymns of the *Rigveda*, and the permanent jar burial was probably a survival from the pre-Aryan chalcolithic culture of the Indus valley. No burial jar assignable to the Vedic folk and the Vedic age has been discovered. * * * * The people who lie buried in the cemetery at Harappa, Area H, were a body of strangers who failed to make any lasting contribution to the cultural history of the Indus valley.' (p. 380)

'* * * * Do we discern the beginnings of these religions in the Indus Valley in the Chalcolithic age ? Impenetrable darkness intervenes between the seals of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa on the one hand, and the earliest Upanishads and the Buddhists and Jain texts on the other. But till archaeology comes to our rescue, it may be possible, by discarding the current dogmas, to endeavour to lift this darkness partially by working backward from the evidence furnished by these texts.' (p. 381)

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3. Journal of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta : Sept., 1911, v. 7, 'Dinajpur pillar inscription', p. 615.

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11. Journal of the Dept. of Letters, Calcutta University : 1920, 'Medieval sculpture in Eastern India', p 225 ; 1921, 'Four ancient Yaksa statues', p. 47 ; 1922, 'Races of India', p 295.

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13. *The Modern Review :* 1919, June, 'Inter-caste marriage in Buddhist India', p. 595 ; 1920, March, 'Hindu Parliament and Saisunaka statues', p 311 ; 1920, Aug., 'The scope and methods of anthropology' p. 137 ; 1932, Jan., 'Annual bibliography of Indian archaeology', p. 51 ; 1932, Aug , 'Sind five thousand years ago', p. 151 ; 1933, Jan., 'The Brahmanic sculpture of the Gupta period', p. 97 ; 1933, Dec., 'Mahatma Gandhi on the morality of threatening suicide', p. 662 ; 1935, March, 'Election of two of the early kings of Bengal', p. 347 ; 1936, Jan., 'Hinduism and the untouchables', p. 97 ; 1942, July, 'The Indian Union, the Mughal empire and the Maratha State', p. 52. [Published after death —his last]

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16. *Rupam* : 1924, No. 17, 'Beginning of the Sikhara of the Nagara (Indo-Aryan) temple'.
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2. *Rupam*, Nos. 19 & 20, 1924—'Mr. Chanda's discovery of New Orissa Sculptures', p. 140.
3. *Science and Culture*, 1942, Aug.—'The late Rai Bahadur Ramaprasad Chanda', p. 65 : compiled by some friends and colleagues.
4. *Modern Review*, 1942, Aug.—'Rai Bahadur Ramaprasad Chanda', p. 131, by Shri Nirodbandhu Sanyal.

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["জন্মভূমি" পত্রিকার ১৩৩১ আষাঢ় সংখ্যায় আলোচিত]

১১। মাসিক "বসুমতি" : ১৩৩২ আষাঢ় 'বিক্রমপুরে চিত্তরঞ্জন' পৃঃ ৩৬৩ ; ১৩৩৯ মাঘ 'বঙ্গ বিদূষণ (আলোচনা)' পৃঃ ৫১০ ; ১৩৪০ বৈশাখ 'শরৎবাবুর স্বদেশ ও সাহিত্য' (আলোচনা) পৃঃ ১০৩ ; ঐ জ্যৈষ্ঠ 'মানব ধর্ম্মের মর্ম্মকথা' (সমালোচনা) পৃঃ ৩১৫ ; ঐ আষাঢ় 'মানব সত্যে ভুল' পৃঃ ৫২১ ; ঐ শ্রাবণ 'সীমার মধ্যে অসীমের পালা' পৃঃ ৬৭৮ ; ১৩৪২ জ্যৈষ্ঠ 'সাহিত্য ও সমাজ' (আলোচনা) পৃঃ ২৯৬ ; ঐ আষাঢ় 'ভগবদ্ গীতা ও বাংলার প্রেমধর্ম' পৃঃ ৪১৫ ; ১৩৪৪ কার্ত্তিক 'কর্ত্তার ইচ্ছায় কর্ম্ম' (আলোচনা) পৃঃ ৭৮ ; ১৩৪৫ কার্ত্তিক ও মাঘ 'বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র ও রাষ্ট্রীয় জীবন' পৃঃ ১১০ ও ৫৫৩।

১২। বার্ষিক "বসুমতী" সচিত্র : ১৩৩৩ 'লিঙ্গরাজ (সচিত্র)'।

১৩। "উদয়ন" : ১৩৪০ পৌষ 'ত্যাগের জয়' পৃঃ ১০৪১ ; ১৩৪১ পৌষ 'বাঙ্গলার বৈষ্ণব ধর্ম্ম' পৃঃ ১০৯৩।

১৪। "ভারতবর্ষ" : ১৩৪১ ভাদ্র 'শ্রীচৈতন্যের সময়ে নবদ্বীপের স্থিতিস্থান' (প্রাচীন ম্যাপ সহ) পৃঃ ৩৪৫।

১৫। "ভূমিকা-ধর্ম্মচক্র", পৃঃ ৭-১৯, 'সারনাথ বিবরণ' গ্রন্থে—শ্রীভবতোষ মজুমদার প্রণীত ; ভারত সরকার প্রকাশন, ১৯২৭।

৺রমাপ্রসাদ সম্পর্কীয় কয়েকটি রচনা—

১। "রমাপ্রসাদ চন্দ", 'প্রবাসী' আষাঢ় ১৩৪৯—বিবধ প্রসঙ্গ, পৃঃ ৩০৮।

২। "চিত্রে নবদ্বীপ" শ্রীযুক্ত শরদিন্দু নারায়ণ রায় বেদান্তদর্শন-সঙ্কলিত, পৃঃ ১৩৯-১৪৯ (৫ম সংস্করণ)· প্রাপ্তিস্থান—শ্রীচৈতন্য রিসার্চ ইন্‌ষ্টিটিউট, কলিকাতা।

৩। "বাঙ্গলার প্রত্নতাত্ত্বিক—রায় বাহাদুর রমাপ্রসাদ চন্দ", 'দৈনিক বসুমতী' ৪ঠা চৈত্র ১৩৬২, পৃঃ ৮ ; লেখক—শ্রীশৌরীন্দ্র কুমার ঘোষ।

৪। "রমাপ্রসাদ চন্দ," 'সমকালীন' মাসিক, শ্রাবণ ১৩৭০ পৃঃ ২০৮-২১৪। লেখক—শ্রীগৌরাঙ্গ গোপাল সেনগুপ্ত।

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